

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 SP-02 STR-04 TRSE-00

LAB-04 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 TAR-01 SS-15 NSC-05 PA-01

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R 081612Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9964

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 05264

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: EC MEMBERSHIP: COMMONS DEBATE OPENS AND WILSON  
RULES THREATEN SERIOUS LABOR SPLIT

REF: LONDON 5215

1. SUMMARY - AS EXPECTED, PRIME MINISTER WILSON'S GUIDE-  
LINES FOR CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT MINISTERS DURING REFEREN-  
DUM PERIOD WERE OF GREATER SIGNIFICANCE THAN INITIAL DE-  
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BATE IN COMMONS OR OTHER APRIL 7 DEVELOPMENTS. WILSON

RULES PROHIBIT MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT FROM DISAGREEING WITH OFFICIAL POSITION ON EC IN COMMONS AND PROVOKED BITTER ANGER OF ANTI-EC LABORITES. GREATER THREAT TO WILSON AND LABOR GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, WAS INDUSTRY MINISTER HEFFER'S PROMISED DEFIANCE OF WILSON GAG RULE. TASK OF PARTY CONCILIATORS IS NOW IMMENSELY MORE DIFFICULT, AND PROSPECTS FOR SERIOUS DIVISION ENHANCED. END SUMMARY.

2. MAJOR APRIL 7 DEVELOPMENT WAS PUBLICATION OF PRIME MINISTER WILSON'S GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT MINISTERS DURING CAMPAIGN PERIOD (REFTEL). REITERATING PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED DECISION THAT MINISTERS WILL BE PERMITTED TO ADVOCATE DIFFERING VIEWS ON EC MEMBERSHIP, GUIDELINES PROHIBITED THEM FROM VOICING SUCH DISSENT IN COMMONS AND BARRED THEM FROM APPEARING PUBLICLY IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH OTHER MINISTERS. RULES WOULD ALSO SPECIFICALLY REQUIRE MINISTERS TO STICK TO OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION IN REPLYING TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS OR, ALTERNATIVELY, TO ALLOW OTHER MINISTERS TO FIELD QUESTIONS. (THIS RESTRICTION WAS AIMED AT TRADE SECRETARY SHORE AND INDUSTRY SECRETARY BENN WHO HAVE USED SUCH QUESTIONS TO ADVANCE ANTI-MARKET VIEWS.) IMPLICIT IN GUIDELINES WAS THREAT THAT VIOLATORS WILL BE DISCIPLINED. RESPONSE WAS IMMEDIATE AND PREDICTABLY BITTER. LEFT-WING, ANTI-EC TRIBUNE GROUP DISPATCHED LETTER TO WILSON PROTESTING "THE GAGGING" OF ANTI-MARKET MINISTERS AND DEMANDING THAT IT BE CHANGED. PRESS ALSO REPORTED SERIOUS DISCONTENT AMONG ANTI-MARKETEERS AND THAT SEVERAL JUNIOR MINISTERS WERE CONSIDERING A DIRECT CHALLENGE OF THE GUIDELINES.

3. THE FIRST CHALLENGE CAME IN FORM OF LETTER FROM INDUSTRY MINISTER ERIC HEFFER WHO, ACCORDING TO APRIL 8 WIRE REPORTS, WROTE PRIME MINISTER STATING HIS INTENTION TO DEFY THESE RULES BY SPEAKING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT DURING CURRENT DEBATE IN COMMONS.

4. FIRST DAY OF DEBATE IN COMMONS UNFOLDED MUCH AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED. WILSON LED OFF WITH LOW-KEY, CONCILIATION

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TORY ADDRESS WHICH LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT HIS COMMITMENT TO CONTINUED UK MEMBERSHIP AND CALLED FOR REASONED DISCUSSION OF ISSUE RATHER THAN EMOTIONAL DIATRIBE. HE DREW CHEERS FROM LABOR'S PRO-MARKETEERS, WHILE ANTI-EC BACKBENCHERS SAT IN SULLEN SILENCE. SCOTTISH SECRETARY WILLIAM ROSS WAS ONLY ANTI-MARKET CABINET MEMBER ON FRONT BENCH DURING WILSON'S SPEECH. CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMAN WILLIAM WHITELAW FOLLOWED WITH WEAK SPEECH ARGUING THAT

RENEGOTIATION WAS BLATENT POLITICAL MANUEVER AND REFERENDUM IS DANGEROUS GAMBLE, BUT STRONGLY BACKING GOVERNMENT MOTION. LIBERAL JEREMY THORPE WAS NEXT WITH WHAT WAS BEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE PRO-EC SPEECH OF THE DAY. HE TICKED OFF ALL MAJOR ANTI-EC ARGUMENTS AND THEN DESTROYED THEM WITH REASONED REBUTTAL. DEBATE THAT FOLLOWED FAILED TO BREAK NEW GROUND OR, PRESUMABLY, CHANGE ANY OPINIONS.

5. PRO-EC LABOR MPS CALLED PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THEY HAD OBTAINED SUPPORT OF 92 PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES, INCLUDING 26 MINISTERS, FOR MOTION SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT'S PRO-MEMBERSHIP RECOMMENDATION. THEY SOUGHT

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TO RATIONALIZE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEIR 92 SIGNATURES AND 137 MPS SIGNING ANTI-MARKET MOTION BY CLAIMING THAT THEIRS WERE SPONSORS, WHILE DISSIDENTS WERE MERELY SUPPORTERS. PRESS ALSO REPORTED INTENSIFYING PRESSURE ON LABOR MPS NOT TO VOTE AGAINST GOVERNMENT WHEN MEMBERSHIP RECOMMENDATION COMES TO VOTE APRIL 9.

6. COMMENT: CONDUCT GUIDELINES HAVE SHARPLY INCREASED THE LIKELIHOOD OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE CONTENDING FACTIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT. CLEARLY, WILSON WAS A-CONFIDENTIAL

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WARE OF THIS RISK, BUT EVIDENTLY DECIDED THAT HE HAD TO TRY TO STEM RISING ANTI-EC SENTIMENT AMONG HIS MINISTERS IN ORDER TO AVOID THE PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF FRONTBENCH SPOKESMEN DEBATING ONE ANOTHER IN COMMONS. THE HEFFER THREAT, IF AS REPORTED BY PRESS, IS ESPECIALLY INTERESTING, AS HEFFER IS WIDELY CONSIDERED TO BE TONY BENN'S STALKING-HORSE. IF THE THREAT IS CARRIED OUT WITHOUT HEFFER'S VOLUNTARY RESIGNATION, IT WILL FORCE THE CONFRONTATION WILSON AND OTHERS HAVE SOUGHT TO AVOID, AND WILL PLACE THE PRIME MINISTER SQUARELY ON THE HORNS OF A BITTER DILEMMA. IF HEFFER SPEAKS OUT AND IS NOT DISCIPLINED, THE FLOOD GATES WILL BE OPEN FOR OTHER ANTI-EC MINISTERS, AND THE PRO-MARKET FACTION WILL BE ANGERED. SHOULD WILSON DISCIPLINE HEFFER, THERE WILL BE AN INTENSELY BITTER REACTION ON THE ANTI-MARKET SIDE, POSSIBLY INCITING OTHER MINISTERS TO FOLLOW HEFFER'S EXAMPLE. EITHER EVENTUALITY WOULD THREATEN WILSON'S TENURE AS PARTY LEADER AND, POSSIBLY, CONTINUATION OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT. FROM WILSON'S PERSPECTIVE, THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE BETTER OF THESE OPTIONS. IT SEEMS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT MICHAEL FOOT AND OTHERS WILL BE TRYING DESPERATELY TO HEAD OFF WHAT LOOKS TO BE AN ALMOST UNAVOIDABLE CRUNCH

FOR WILSON AND THE LABOR PARTY.

7. THE LABOR PRO-MARKETEERS' ATTEMPT TO COUNTER THEIR COLLEAGUES' ANTI-EC MOTION WAS UNFORTUNATE (AND PROBABLY UNNECESSARY), AS IT REVEALED THEIR EVIDENT NUMERICAL WEAKNESS. PRO-MARKETEERS, HOWEVER, TOLD EMBOFF THAT MANY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES WHO FAVOR CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP DID NOT SIGN THE MOTION BECAUSE OF CONSTITUENCY PRESSURE. THESE PRESSURES COULD ALSO INFLUENCE THEIR VOTE, AND ACCORDINGLY CONSTITUTE ANOTHER PROBLEM FOR WILSON.

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